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Homemakers' chat

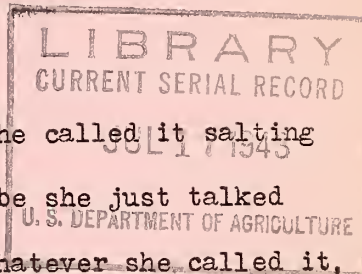
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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30, 1943

SUBJECT: "PRESERVING BY LIGHT-SALT BRINING." Information from chemists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Maybe your grandmother called it brining...or maybe she called it salting ...maybe she spoke of it as "salt-and-sour pickling" or maybe she just talked about "putting down" vegetables in crocks in the cellar. Whatever she called it, she meant the old-time way of preserving vegetables with salt...the old familiar method that makes cabbage into sauerkraut and cucumbers into dill pickles.

Long before the discovery of modern canning housewives were saving their garden vegetables by brining them. Then canning came to be the preferred way of putting up vegetables. Today brining is coming back as a wartime method of preserving, because of the shortage of pressure cookers and other canning supplies. Brining is a good way to preserve non-acid vegetables especially, if you have no pressure cooker for canning them. Brining calls for no special equipment or scarce materials. And some 25 vegetables are suitable for preserving this way -- from the first greens of the spring to the late cabbages and turnips of the fall. Brined vegetables have a slightly salt, slightly sour flavor. If you like your vegetables seasoned with salt and with a little lemon juice or vinegar, you should enjoy brined vegetables. Most brined vegetables need cooking before serving. But some of them, like brined green tomatoes and dill pickles, you serve cold as a relish.

Food chemists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture have been studying this process of brining in recent years and have made improvements on the old method used by our grandmothers, so that brined vegetables today taste better and have more vitamin value. Grandmother put down her vegetables with a great deal

of salt...so much salt that they kept in open crocks all winter long...and so much salt that before using them she had to soak them for a whole day to remove enough salt to make them palatable. Unfortunately, all that soaking removed vitamins and minerals along with the salt. So Grandmother's brined vegetables, by the time they reached the dinner table, didn't rate much in food value.

The new method of brining calls for considerably less salt to begin with and little or no soaking before cooking and serving. And with the new method you don't leave the vegetables down in open crocks all winter. You keep them in crocks only long enough for the pickling or fermenting process to take place --about two weeks. Then you pack them in glass jars...process in hot water... and seal them like canned vegetables. You see, after the vegetables stand in the brine or salt awhile, they begin to ferment. The same bacteria that sours milk act on the salty liquid around the vegetables turning it acid. And the acid caused by this fermentation helps preserve the vegetable and gives it the characteristic pickled taste.

That's how brining works. Now about brining at home, step by step. Just two vegetables -- corn and lima beans--need heavy salt to keep them. But other garden vegetables, many of them ready now--snap beans...greens of all kinds... green tomatoes...carrots...beets...and cauliflower--you can brine with "light salt" brine, as the chemists call it. So today, let's consider how to preserve by the light salt method your green beans, greens, young green tomatoes, carrots, beets, and cauliflower.

First, wash and scald the container you are going to use for putting down the vegetables in brine. It may be a large crock, a large glass jar, a wooden tub or keg...but it must be thoroughly clean.

Second, make the brine mixture. Use a half pound of salt and a half pint of vinegar to each gallon of water. And make enough to fill half the crock or

other container you are going to use.

Second, make the brine mixture. You want enough brine to fill half the container you use. Make the brine of a half pound of salt...and a half pint of vinegar to each gallon of water.

Now, prepare the vegetables just as you would for the table or for canning. Snap beans, for example, you wash, remove ends, then break in pieces or leave whole, as you do for cooking.

Scald 5 minutes in boiling water or cook in steamer 5 minutes and drain. Then cool and pack in the crock or other container...pack up to a couple of inches of the top.

Now take a clean piece of cheesecloth and cover it over the blanched vegetables in the crock, tucking the ends down inside the crock. Over the cheesecloth lay a plate and weigh the plate down with a clean stone about as heavy as a brick.

Last of all, pour on the brine. Pour it over the vegetables until it comes up to the plate.

Keep the crock of vegetables and brine at a temperature between 70 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Very shortly fermentation will start. Watch for a white scum that forms on the surface. When the scum forms, take off the weight and the plate...then lift up the cheesecloth by the sides and corners so that you lift off the scum with it. Wash the cloth thoroughly...also the plate and the stone. Put back the cloth as you had it with the plate and stone on top. If scum develops fast, remove it every second day.

In about 2 weeks the fermentation should be over. You can cook and use the vegetables then...or put them up in glass jars for use next winter. To put them up in jars, repack them in pint or quart jars...fill the jars to a half inch of the top with brine. Partially seal the tops. Place the partially sealed jars in the boiling water bath, and process pint jars 25 minutes...quart jars 30 minutes. Seal jars and store like canned vegetables.

When you get ready to use the brined vegetables, rinse a couple of times and then cook in fresh water about 10 minutes.

